



Depression is a medical condition – like cardiovascular disease or diabetes – and can be treated.

With treatment, most people with depression get better. Offer hope and keep reassuring your family member that, with time and help, he or she will feel better.

Fast facts on depression

- Depression is one of the most common and treatable mental health conditions²
- Almost 7 percent of Americans have depression in a given year¹
- Service members who have returned from deployments are at increased risk of developing depression¹
- Major depression impacts all services, ranks and ages
- Women are 70 percent more likely than men to experience depression¹

Signs that your family member might have depression

Over the past two weeks, has your family member often been bothered by:

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Feeling down, depressed or hopeless?
☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered “yes” to either of these questions, encourage your family member to talk to his/her health care provider.

Resources

DoD and VA Resources

Military/Veterans Crisis Line
 800-273-8255, service members and veterans, press 1
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Military OneSource
 800-342-9647
www.militaryonesource.mil

Real Warriors
www.realwarriors.net

Defense Centers of Excellence Outreach Center
 866-966-1020
www.dcoe.mil/Families/Help.aspx

My HealtheVet
www.myhealth.va.gov

Deployment Health Clinical Center
www.pdhealth.mil

External Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
 800-826-3632
www.dbsalliance.org

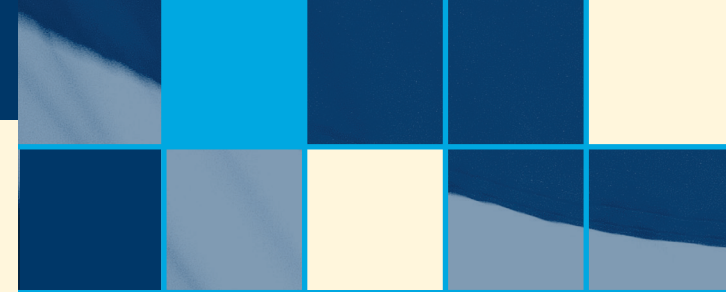
Families for Depression Awareness
 781-890-0220
www.familyaware.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org

Mental Health America
 800-969-6642
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

National Institute of Mental Health
 866-615-6464
www.nimh.nih.gov

SAMHSA's National Helpline
 Provides 24-hour free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish;
 Call 800-662-HELP (4357)



Depression: Facts for Families

Resilience
 Reintegration
 Recovery



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Symptoms of depression

The symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling sad, angry or irritable
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Loss of interest in activities usually enjoyed
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of energy or feeling tired most of the time
- Significant changes in appetite or weight
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Thinking about death or hurting oneself

Not everyone who experiences depression has the same symptoms. Encourage your family member to speak to a health care provider if he/she experiences several of these symptoms at the same time, if they last longer than two weeks, and if they interfere with his/her normal daily activities.



Do not ignore comments or written notes about suicide, especially if your family member has attempted suicide before or has a friend or family member who died by suicide.

Causes of depression

Most experts believe that depression is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental and psychological factors.¹

Risk factors include:

- Personal or family history of depression
- Permanent change of station, deployment and family separation
- Certain physical illnesses and medications
- Reintegration
- Mission/operational stress
- High operational tempo

Treatment of depression is effective!

Depression is treated with psychotherapy and medication, or a combination of the two. Your health care provider will want to know more about your family member and will work with him/her to choose the best treatment.

Psychotherapy – Has been shown to be effective in the treatment of depression.

There are many types of psychotherapies proven effective by research:

- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Behavioral Therapy/Behavioral Activation (BT/BA)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)
- Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)
- Problem-Solving Therapy (PST)

These psychotherapies are provided by trained mental health providers and are available at most military treatment facilities, clinics and hospitals.

Medication – Prescription medication can often help treat depression more quickly.

Many people begin to feel better within the first few weeks of treatment. However, because everyone reacts differently to medication, it may take time to find the one that works best for your family member. Don't get discouraged!

Antidepressant medications:

- Only work if taken every day
- Are not habit-forming or addictive
- Take time to work
- Must be taken even after your family member begins to feel better
- May have side effects which usually improve with time
- Should not be stopped abruptly; a health care provider should be contacted before stopping

If there is no improvement in your family member's symptoms after four to six weeks, encourage him/her to discuss other treatment options with his/her health care provider.



What you can do to help

- Encourage your service member to talk to his/her battle buddies, shipmates, fellow Marines and/or wingmen
- Educate yourself – it's hard to help someone if you don't understand the condition—then share what you have learned with your family member
- Encourage your family member to talk with his/her health care provider; offer to call for an appointment or to accompany him/her
- Encourage your service member to talk with members of his/her command team
- Encourage participation in activities or hobbies he/she once enjoyed
- Don't give up too soon – your depressed family member may have to hear more than once and from several people that he/she deserves to feel better and can, with proper treatment

References

- 1 Management of Major Depressive Disorder Working Group, Department of Veterans Affairs & Department of Defense. (2016). VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Depressive Disorder. Version 3.0. Retrieved from <http://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/mdd/VADoDMDDCPFINAL1.pdf>
- 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health. (2015). Depression: What you need to know (NIH Publication No. 15-3561). Retrieved from <https://infocenter.nimh.nih.gov/pubstatic/NIH%2015-3561/NIH%2015-3561.pdf>